

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: EX-GOVERNOR QURESHI FOR PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY/
CHIEF MINISTER?

REF: LAHORE 296

1. BY-ELECTION FOR PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT IN MUZAFFARGARH DISTRICT VACATED BY NEW GOVERNOR MUSTAFA KHAR MARCH 10 (REFTEL) HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 20. SURPRISINGLY LITTLE COMMENT HAS BEEN NOTED THUS FAR FROM PRESS OR PUBLIC CONCERNING ASPIRANTS FOR SEAT, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HEARD SUGGESTION THAT SEAT MIGHT BE GIVEN TO DEPOSED GOVERNOR SADIQ HUSSAINI QURESHI AS CONSOLATION PRIZE FOR ACCEPTING HIS REMOVAL SO MAGNANIMOUSLY MARCH 14.

2. LAHORE URDU DAILY WAFaq MARCH 28 CARRIES SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT REPORT FROM MUZAFFARGARH COVERING GOVERNOR KHAR'S CURRENT VISIT TO HOME DISTRICT TO MEND POLITICAL FENCES. PAPER QUOTES KHAR AS "DISCLOSING" THAT PARTY CHAIRMAN BHUTTO HAD DECIDED TO AWARD PPP TICKET IN BY-ELECTION TO EX-GOVERNOR QURESHI AND THAT HE (KHAR) HAD RETURNED HOME "TO APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE TO MAKE QUAID-E-AWAM'S (I.E. BHUTTO'S) CANDIDATE SUCCESSFUL."

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3. COMMENT: WHILE THIS REPORT HAS NOT YET APPEARED IN

ANY OTHER PAPER, WE SEE NO REASON TO DOUBT IT, AS IT WOULD BE LOGICAL MOVE IN "ROTATION AND REVOLUTION" OF OFFICES AMONG PARTY FAITHFUL WHICH BHUTTO PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED LAST MONTH (LAHORE 218 AND A-5).

4. WE SEE QURESHI'S ELECTION TO PA AS PRELUDE TO HIS BEING APPOINTED CHIEF MINISTER OF PUNJAB IN PLACE OF INCUMBENT RAMAY -- OR AT LEAST QUALIFYING HIM TO STAND IN WINGS READY, WILLING AND ABLE TO STEP IN WHEN NEEDED. LAST JANUARY KHAR, IN CONFIDING TO US HE WOULD SOON BE RE-APPOINTED GOVERNOR, ASSERTED THAT QURESHI WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME HIS CHIEF MINISTER (LAHORE 85). AND HE TOLD US LAST MONTH THAT HE SAW HIS COMING ROLE AS GOVERNOR AS HAVING GREATER POWERS THAN PRESENTLY ALLOWED, SINCE THAT WAS "ONLY WAY TO GET THINGS DONE" (LAHORE 154).

5. MANY OBSERVERS THINK RAMAY'S DAYS AS CHIEF MINISTER ARE NUMBERED IN INEVITABLE POWER CONTEST WITH KHAR, FIRST SIGNS OF WHICH ARE BEGINNING TO EMERGE. QURESHI'S NOMINATION AND ELECTION (PROBABLY BY DEFAULT) TO PA WOULD ADD WEIGHT TO KHAR'S AMBITIONS AS FORMER WOULD PRESUMABLY BE WILLING TO PLAY ROLE OF CHIEF MINISTER SUBSERVIENT TO STRONG GOVERNOR.
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